

STATE OF IOWA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
UTILITIES BOARD

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| IN RE:<br><br>STACEY PAULSEN,<br><br>Complainant,<br><br>v.<br><br>MIDAMERICAN ENERGY COMPANY,<br><br>Respondent. | DOCKET NO. C-99-111 |
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**ORDER DENYING REQUEST FOR FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCEEDINGS**

(Issued August 18, 1999)

On May 6, 1999, Stacey Paulsen filed with the Utilities Board (Board) a written complaint against MidAmerican Energy Company (MidAmerican). Ms. Paulsen alleged that her electric meter was malfunctioning and, as a result, her budget billing in February 1999 had been increased from \$74 per month to \$119 per month. Ms. Paulsen had complained to MidAmerican regarding her meter in February 1999 and had contacted the Board's staff by telephone on April 19, 1999.

MidAmerican formally responded to the complaint on May 26, 1999. MidAmerican said it changed Ms. Paulsen's meter on February 5, 1999. The meter was placed on a pallet for general testing. MidAmerican said it tested the meter on April 20, 1999, and found the meter was 100.06 percent accurate. IOWA ADMIN.

CODE 199-20.4(14) provides that a meter is accurate if it is within a range of two percent fast or slow.

On June 30, 1999, the Consumer Services Section issued a proposed resolution which found that the meter readings during the disputed period were actual meter reads, not estimated reads, and that the meter in question was accurate with the standards set by the Board's rules. No billing adjustment was recommended. Ms. Paulsen filed a request for formal complaint proceedings on July 29, 1999.

IOWA CODE § 476.3(1) (1999) provides, in part, that following informal complaint proceedings, "[t]he complainant or the public utility also may petition the board to initiate a formal proceeding which petition shall be granted if the board determines that there is any reasonable ground for investigating the complaint." This is the standard the Board applies to requests for formal complaint proceedings.

All documents contained in the file of an informal complaint proceeding are part of the record. IOWA ADMIN. CODE 199-6.7 (1999). Thus, in determining whether there is any reasonable ground for instituting formal complaint proceedings, the Board reviews the entire file.

The file indicates that while there may have been some miscommunication between MidAmerican and Ms. Paulsen, the meter readings and meter were accurate. No meter test refereed by a member of the Board's staff was requested. Therefore, there is nothing in the record that would question the results of the meter test performed by MidAmerican.

In addition, a review of Ms. Paulsen's billings indicate that while her usage dropped for three months after the new meter was installed, her usage increased in June and July 1999 to high levels. Her usage patterns are further evidence that the previous meter is accurate. Ms. Paulsen's increased usage could be caused by a number of things, including changes in weather, changes in appliance usage, appliance malfunction, or faulty household wiring. None of these are the responsibility of MidAmerican. The request for formal complaint proceedings will be denied.

**IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:**

The request for formal complaint proceedings filed by Stacey Paulsen on July 29, 1999, is denied.

**UTILITIES BOARD**

/s/ Allan T. Thoms

/s/ Susan J. Frye

ATTEST:

/s/ Raymond K. Vawter, Jr.      /s/ Diane Munns  
Executive Secretary

Dated at Des Moines, Iowa, this 18<sup>th</sup> day of August, 1999.